"I cannot offer you anything similar," Spock said thoughtfully. "We know of space flight, of course, but we have never desired it."

"What I don't understand is--" Kirk hesitated, then continued as Spock looked at him expectantly "Why don't the Orions enslave Vulcans? Compared to their weapons, yours are primitive. You'd have no defense."

Spock laughed. "Vulcans do not make good slaves," he said, "and the Orions are too good as traders to waste time on an unprofitable venture. We are their best market for more docile slaves, and we give them what they want willingly."

"What do they want?"

"Warriors. When the Orions discover a profitable planet, their policy is to conquer it, absorb it into their Empire, but to interfere as little as possible with its internal politics. The one thing they do control strictly is weaponry. All forms of weapons more advanced than variations on the speak, the sword, and the bow, are forbidden. The prohibition serves a double purpose. The conquered cannot rebel against their masters, and wholesale destructive warfare which might interfere with profits is impossible. Why Earth is treated differently I do not know. It may be that the Orions consider that your planet has more to offer than merely slaves, but if you are rebuilding your world, you may not have yet reached the level they wish. When you do, your world will become another subject planet of the Empire."

"Or we might defeat them," Kirk said challengingly.

"Possible, but unlikely. The Orions have much experience. However, because they do not interfere in the politics of their subjects, wars between competing power groups are common. As shrewd traders the Orions profit by supplying mercenaries to both sides. Vulcans, being the finest warriors in the galaxy, are in great demand. We fight for the glory and so need not be compelled. They know this."

"You mean you fight on other worlds?"

"I personally have not, but then I am not yet an initiate warrior. Selon has fought three campaigns with his war party. It is my hope to be accepted into his band. All my life I have watched the stars and wondered about the worlds that circle them. I have listened to the tales of the warriors and I long to see the mystery and the wonder for myself, to explore and to learn. One day, if I achieve--" He broke off, unwilling to speak of his dream to a slave, however unusual. "There is great competition to be so chosen," he continued. "It is a great honor, and one I intend to achieve."

Kirk looked at the Vulcan for a moment with complete understanding. He too had felt the lure of the stars. It was that call which had guided his choice of career....that risk which had resulted in his slavery.

"I'll never understand your people," he sighed at last. "You lay such great stress on honor, and yet you can keep slaves. Don't you ever think it is wrong, to own another intelligent being in the same way as you own your hunting cats?"

"Wrong? How can it be wrong?" Spock looked puzzled. "Things are as they have always been. A warrior is a warrior. A Tellertie is a laborer. Each performs the task for which he is best suited. Would you have me, or Satak, draw water from the river, or have Selon tend the flocks?"

"It doesn't have to be like that," Kirk said earnestly. "Each to his own skill, yes, but giving service freely, in cooperation."

"And who controls when the Pavan decides he wishes to fight as a warrior? No, James, it would not work. The Vulcan is master, so that all is done that must be done. We house, feed and clothe our slaves, educate them, tend them in sickness, and provide for them when they can no longer work. Would you have the infirm, who cannot earn their keep, cast out to starve? It is true that there is occasionally a bad master, such as Savak, but the system has worked for many generations, James. It works because it is right."

"By your argument, where do I fit in?" Kirk asked. "Humans are supposed to be pleasure slaves, but you don't treat me as one." Suddenly realizing what he had said, he colored, hoping the Vulcan would not think he meant--. But Spock's mind was on other things.

"The only reason I do not treat you as a pleasure slave is because I do not desire such a companion," he said absently. "If I did, that is what you would be. The sensible thing would be to sell you, or give you to someone who would use you as you are meant to be used--Satak, for instance--but the service you do give pleases me, and though it is perhaps wasteful, I should like to keep you. The question is: in what capacity?"

Spock was silent for a few minutes, then he seemed to make up his mind, for he spoke again.

"I do have a proposal, one which will give you the mental stimulation and physical exercise you have convinced me you need. If you wish I will have you trained to bear arms so that you may accompany me into battle. Skilled fighting slaves are highly valued in our society, especially among warriors, although they do not usually risk one as beautiful as you. However, you do not share my bed, and you might prefer such a life to acting merely as my body servant."

"Yes!" Kirk's eyes sparkled with excitement. "If it pleases you, my lord," he hastily added.

"It does, James." Spock settled back on the pillows. "It is decided then. Tomorrow we will begin."

True to his word, Spock applied for and received formal permission to train Kirk as a fighting slave, and Selon added the approving comment, "As you will discover when you travel alone, Spock, a slave who merely warms your bed can be a liability. If the Human is as intelligent as you think, it would be foolish to waste him. Indeed, I almost wish now that I had kept him myself."

Under Spock's tuition the Human rapidly proved himself proficient with bow, sword and spear. The lirpa, duelling weapon of the warriors, he was not permitted to touch. Even the Vulcans respected his skill as he practiced, and Spock's circle of friends began to treat him with a new seriousness, Satak to the extent of supervising his training when Spock was absent.

Satak made no secret of the fact that he was attracted to Kirk, and often teased him, but it was done openly and good-naturedly. The Human soon found himself able to laugh and reply with confidence.